

Cable
Text:

UNCLAS AMMAN 00255

SIPDIS
CXAMMAN:

ACTION: AMB
INFO: DAO ECON DCM

DISSEMINATION: AMB /1
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:DHAE
DRAFTED: ECON:GLAWLESS
CLEARED: A/DCM:CHENZEL, ECON:REASON, HACC:ESBRENNAN

VZCZCAJI377
PP RUEHC RUCNRAQ RUEHGB RUEHRC RUCPDOC RUEATRS
RUEKJCS RHEHNSC RHMFISS RUCNDT RUEKJCS
DE RUEHAM #0255/01 0111132
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 111132Z JAN 05
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8220
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0723
RUEHRC/FAS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY 0164
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0094
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000255

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

BAGHDAD FOR FAS JAMES SMITH, ANITA KATIAL
BAGHDAD FOR ECON JAMES BOUGHNER
BAGHDAD ALSO FOR USAID ROBERT PIERCE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ELTN](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN TO EXPEDITE FOOD TRUCKS TO AND FROM IRAQ

REF: A. 04 BAGHDAD 02299 (NOTAL)
[B](#). 04 AMMAN 10012 (NOTAL)
[C](#). BAGHDAD 62 (NOTAL)

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[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY: Jordanian Customs officials confirmed January 4 that they have begun expediting outbound food trucks destined for Iraq under the Public Distribution System (PDS). Customs Director General Mahmoud Quteishat said that GOJ customs is prepared to implement a seven-day, 24-hour clearance schedule for recognizable, empty food trucks entering Jordan from Iraq to pick up more food. He urged his Iraqi counterparts to quickly devise a system similar to that formerly used by the World Food Program (WFP) to designate such trucks for their quick entry into Jordan. Quteishat also outlined fast-track, multiagency GOJ plans to turn the entry of trucks from Iraq into Jordan to a 24/7 operation.
END SUMMARY.

Special Food Truck Lane Into Iraq

[2](#). (SBU) Daman Fawaz, Customs Director at the Al Kerama

border station with Iraq (opposite Trebil) told Acting Econ/C January 4 that PFD trucks with humanitarian food are moving eastward through the old "WFP lane" without incident. He emphasized that 100-200 food trucks are passing through the special Al Kerama lane daily, that the process was proceeding smoothly, and that not a single food truck was waiting on the Jordanian side to pass into Iraq.

¶3. (SBU) Fawaz said that he understood Jordanian Minister of Finance Mohammad Abu Hammour (who oversees Customs) has decided to open the border checkpoint for all incoming vehicles from Iraq around the clock (up to now, the 24-hour service is only made available to passenger traffic from Iraq). Currently, 100 percent of trucks coming in from Iraq are screened (per Ref A) during the hours of 0730 to 1830, he stated. He added that the Customs Department was already working on securing the manpower and extra nighttime lighting systems required to move to a 24-hour-a-day operation. Only a single lane is currently lit at night on the incoming side, he said. Fawaz stated that about 600-700 trucks were coming through to Jordan from Iraq daily.

¶4. (SBU) In a call on Customs DG Quteishat, Acting Econ/C thanked him for the GOJ's cooperation on PFD-related issues, but emphasized the importance of continuing food shipments transiting Jordan to Iraq on an expedited basis, including accommodating the quick re-entry of empty food trucks to continue their important missions. Quteishat confirmed that an interagency security committee has been formed and had met that day to move forward on plans for the capability to receive trucks at all times at Al Kerama. This would facilitate empty trucks coming in to obtain food from ships at Aqaba, he said. A special committee will be going to Al Kerama on January 5 to survey a new truck yard on the incoming side, and outline needs for night-time lighting, he said. Quteishat did not elaborate, saying only that the plan would be completed "soon."

An Interim Solution for Entering Empty Food Trucks

¶5. (SBU) Quteishat said that the GOJ would be willing "tomorrow" to accept the 24-hour, fast-track entry of empty Iraqi food trucks, provided that they were recognizable as such. He recalled that under the UN Oil for Food Program, WFP trucks had an identifiable sign placed in the windshield at the border, that afforded them such expedited treatment. Quteishat stressed that in order for this system to work well, the Iraqi officials at the Trebil exit point would need to "split off" empty PFD trucks into a fast lane.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: From our vantage point, the land transport of PFD foods from Jordan into Iraq appears to be operating well. Embassy believes GOJ Customs is fully prepared to act on the commitments outlined here to expedite the transit of food shipments to Iraq (including the re-entry of empty food trucks into Jordan), provided that they can obtain the appropriate response from their Iraqi counterparts. If Iraqi officials are interested in pursuing this course, they may wish to contact Customs DG Quteishat to work out the modalities of the temporary system for entry of empty food trucks. These measures, combined with more effective traffic management on the Iraqi side of the border, should significantly reduce the current problem of 20-kilometer queues of westbound trucking waiting to leave Iraq, noted in Ref (A).

¶7. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
HALE